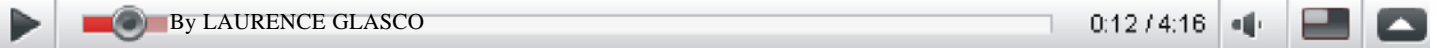


How Barack Obama has inspired new songs around the world.

The Man Behind the Music



Music reflects a people's political, social and cultural life, so it is no surprise that *We Shall Overcome* conveys the optimism and determination of the Civil Rights era, and Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* conveys the disillusionment of the post-Civil Rights era. Similarly, it is no surprise that since Barack Obama has opened a new chapter in the history of race and politics in America, that the music inspired by his candidacy is suffused with his message of hope and change.

Indeed, Obama inspired an unprecedented wave of unsolicited campaign songs and videos. *I Got a Crush...on Obama* by Obama Girl (Amber Lee Ettinger) [was one of the biggest Web videos] of 2007. *Yes We Can*, which has garnered over 15 million viewings so far, earned Will.i.am a Webby award, and [became] the unofficial theme song of the Obama campaign. Together these two videos rank among the most popular political campaign songs of all time.

But the success of these American videos to some extent obscures the degree to which Obama's candidacy captured the imagination of the world and inspired an international outpouring of music.

A music compilation blog called

Obama—The WorldBeat Album from the site Calabash provides a small but useful sampling of this proliferation in world music. In addition to Obama Girl and *Yes We Can*, there is a calypso track by Trinidad's Mighty Sparrow (*Barack the Magnificent*), an Afrobeat rendition by Cameroonian musician Fojeba (*Fired-up! Ready to Go!*), a reggaeton-style song by Miguel Orozco (*La Caminata*) and a Tex-Mex mariachi song (*Viva! Obama '08*). If these songs are representative of broader trends, Obama-inspired world music is upbeat, hopeful, committed and of surprisingly high quality.

Mighty Sparrow's *Barack the Magnificent* is an overtly political praise song that asserts:

*The respect of the world that we now lack,
If you want it back, then vote Barack!
Because this time we come out to vote!
Stop the war!
Stop genocide in Darfur!
No matter what,
Get health care for who have not!...
He stood his ground
When the war was a conception,
Said it was wrong,
So he didn't go along...*

Fojeba's *Fired-up! Ready to Go!* is a sweet, lyrical, complex Central African makossa [a type of music popular in urban Cameroon] that overlays samples of the rhythmic cadences of Obama's own voice with soft guitar riffs and group vocals. The combination is an engaging and

"Obama Girl," Amber Lee Ettinger.

Yes We Can by Will.i.am.



STEVE FRIEDMAN © AP/WIDEWORLD/Handout



inspired music piece that captured Obama's mood and message.

Obama: *But in the unlikely story that is America, there has never been anything false about hope.*

Audience: [roar overlaid by a lilting guitar]

Obama: *We've been told we're not ready, or that we shouldn't try, or that we can't. Generations of Americans have responded, with a simple creed that sums up the spirit of a people: "Yes we can. Yes we can. Yes we can."*

Audience [chants with soft guitar overlay] *"Yes we can."*

Fojeba: *Ready to go. Ready to go. Fired up [repeated over and over].*

Obama: *And if one voice can change a room, it can change a city, and if it can change a city, it can change a state, and if it can change a state, it can change a nation, and if it can change a nation, it can change the world. One voice can change the world! So we just want to know one thing: Are you fired up? [Crowd roars.]*

Obama: *Are you ready to go? [Crowd roars.]*

Fojeba: *I am...ready to go. Ready to go [repeats]. Senator Obama, Senator Obama [repeats] will be [repeats] our next [repeats] president! [repeats]. Ready to go! [repeats]. I am...ready to go [repeats].*

Miguel Orozco, a [Mexican American] from East Los Angeles, has a more direct approach that mixes English and Spanish in the reggaeton *La Caminata*.

Viva! Obama '08 (www.amigosdeobama.com/) urged [Mexican Americans] to get out and vote in the March 4 Texas primary. A band of horns, violins and guitars, with the musicians dressed in full mariachi regalia, has the feel of a paid political song, and its lyrics for that reason are not as engaging as the others. Nonetheless, it catches what young [Mexican Americans]

For more information:

Yes We Can—Barack Obama music video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjXyqcX-mYY>

The Mighty Sparrow—Barack the Magnificent

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnjKmplIFn8>

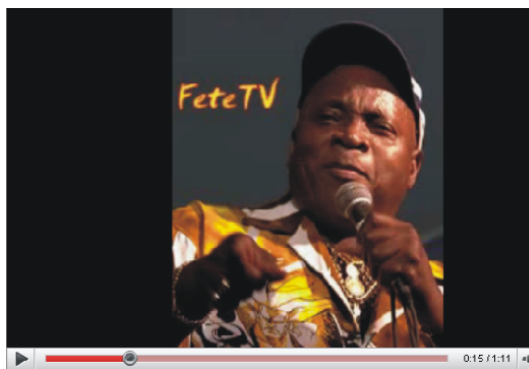
Fired-up! Ready to Go!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3ex_OLA3fs

Calabash-Tune Your World

http://calabash.typepad.com/global_music_news/2008/04/obama-music-is.html

Barack the Magnificent by Mighty Sparrow.



Viva! Obama '08



found fulfilling in Obama's candidacy—his humble origins, a champion of the working class, an ability to bring people together.

*To the candidate Barack Obama
This song we sing to you
from our heart
Born humble and without pretense
He began on the streets of Chicago
Working to fulfill a vision of protecting
working people*

*And bringing us together
In this great nation.
Viva Obama! Viva Obama!
Families will be intact, secure and even
have a health plan*

*Viva Obama! Viva Obama!
A candidate fighting
For our nation
It doesn't matter if you're
from San Antonio
It doesn't matter if you're
from Corpus Christi
From Dallas or from the Valley
From Houston or El Paso
What matters is that
we vote for Obama...*

Jamaican singer Coco Tea's song, entitled simply *Barack Obama*, celebrates an Obama-inspired interracial call for change to meet the needs of the people:

Why why why why why, boy, why why? Lord.

*Well this is not about class nor color,
race nor creed.*

*Make no mistake, it's the changes, what
all the people they need.*

*I'm a shout out: Barack Obama! Barack
Obama! [repeats].*

*Them say Barack Obama! Barack Obama!
Now you can hear it in the morning.
Obama!*

*And you can hear it in the evening.
Obama!*

Black man and white man shouting.

*You can hear them saying: ...Barack
Obama, Barack Obama [repeats]*

They say Barack Obama. [repeats]...

Obama's international appeal rivals that of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela. That he was born to parents who were international as well as interracial, and that he grew up outside the United States makes him a biological and cultural emblem of the new global era. His very persona is an implicit promise that past racial, ethnic and class divisions can be, and are being, overcome. That he speaks of change, of transforming the way Americans deal with each other and with the world also resonates internationally.

Germans see Obama almost as the reincarnation of their favorite American president, John F. Kennedy. Obama's father's people hail him as...the first "Kenyan" president of the United States. [People] in India and Europe with whom I have spoken recently see his rise to prominence as inspiration for what their own societies might one day achieve. On a less optimistic note, a black Cuban friend tells me people there are relatively indifferent to Obama....

A group calling itself The World Wants Obama Coalition tracks Obama's international standing in some 37 countries around the world. The coalition finds that Obama's support defies usual assumptions, being highest in Japan and Brazil, one of which has almost no blacks and the other has more than the United States. Support is also high in Europe. With all this enthusiasm, ...musicians in other nations have produced, or are producing, songs similar to those highlighted on the Calabash Web site....



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